

## STAGELAND ALL A-TIPTOE FOR THE COMING OF SANTA CLAUS

Concerning Satire  
And Its Recreant  
Disciple, ZiegfeldNathan's Portrait of "Follies"  
Producer Not Borne  
Out by Facts.

By EARLE DORSEY.

Skimming through the pages of that piquant periodical which is graced at intervals with the pronouncedly satirical and somewhat enigmatical portraits of George Jean Nathan, the editor of the "Follies," one finds Mr. Nathan indulging the odd thought that Flo Ziegfeld, Jr., for all his genius at form and color, is totally blind on the score of comedy.

"It is common," says Nathan, in effect "for Ziegfeld to utilize a cast of 100 and scenery worth \$200,000 in working up to a joke about Flatbush."

With the statement, even though not buttressed with Mr. Nathan's usually formidable array of authorities, one may presently agree most wholeheartedly, but what Ziegfeld does now and what Ziegfeld did in years gone by is quite another story. If one is to accept the dictum that Ziegfeld is totally blind on the humorous side, one must admit, at once, that such performances as the "Follies" of '07, '08, '09, and even as late of '11, did not exist at all and that comedians like Bert Williams, Ed Wynn, Frank Timony, Bickel, and Watson, Fanny Brice, Billy Rector, and a long and memorable array of others never drew a Ziegfeld paycheck in their lives.

The main weakness of the Nathan contention, though, lies in its utter ignoring of Ziegfeld's pioneer adaptation—to the comic uses of the music stage of the present generation, at least—of that thoroughly comic element, the extravaganza based on topics of the day. It was that very element, interpreted by most pretentious groups of fun-makers, that made the Ziegfeld "Follies" an instantaneous hit and laid the groundwork for the annual series of Ziegfeldian spectacles which have steadily deteriorated in comic valuation since 1908.

In casting one's eye back along the "Follies" of those earlier years, one will recall that they were noteworthy first for their high comic content and secondarily for their extremely musical scores. The anatomical array of femininity, now the headlined feature of a Ziegfeld entertainment, was largely a tertiary consideration in those earlier days nor had the Ziegfeld instinct, in that earlier period, turned so wholeheartedly to form and color and girls as a substitute for words, music and situation.

The chief reaction one experiences to a Ziegfeld performance of the present day is a doleful, lingering regret at the almost total absence of comedy based upon a burlesque of some mementous occasion of the past year. In the earlier "Follies," one went into mild hysteria over burlesques and satire predicated upon the "New York" trial and its legal lights, the opening of the Jamestown exposition and the T. R. personality, the Gibson bathing girl and this was probably a bit later—Nell Brinkley's sketches. The "Follies" of 1920 recently witnessed here, were utterly barren of a single skit, for all the material that dies inherent in the league of nations, the return of the Republican party, the reform wave, the short-skirt fad and the like.

Not only had this earlier Ziegfeldian type of girl-and-music comedy been shelved into the discard, but also the comedians of the latter-day Ziegfeld expositions present a sad, sad contrast to the giants of the Ziegfeld comedy realm of a dozen years ago. With Cantor, Fields, Ray Dooley and such vaudevillians as have later entered the Ziegfeld fold one has only an abstract sympathy. They draw, all too clearly, a sorrowful line of demarcation that is not pleasant to those of us who liked the early—the funny—"Follies" and not the electrician's art gallery they have latterly become.

There is really no particularly mystery in Ziegfeld's departure from the form of the show he first gave America in "The Follies." He carries today probably only a few more girls than he did then and it is doubtful if his scenery of the present day costs much more—all things being equal—than it did a dozen years ago. The "Follies" is now, as Ziegfeld claims in his advertising "a national institution," which, on its bare reputation, will average \$40,000 a week from one end of the season to the other. Why then, the need for a departure from a fourth to a third of his outlay in addition for a cast of comedians or make an additional outlay for a performance that will be quite superfluously funny.

Putting it in that form, of course, there is no need at all. The "Follies," regardless of competition, can expect the limit of patronage while on the road and it remains in Manhattan only so long as the intake makes its retention there desirable. Additionally, there are probably more people attending the worst "Follies" of all, this year, than attended the best "Follies" of all, a dozen years past. So Mr. Ziegfeld without doubt, has the best of financial reasons for permitting his entertainment to decline.

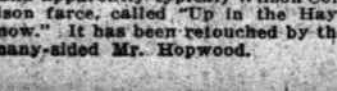
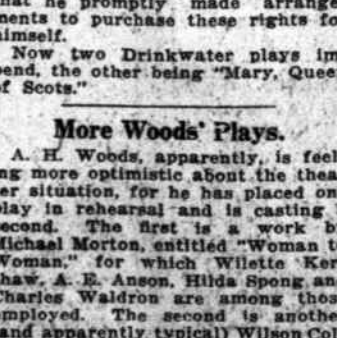
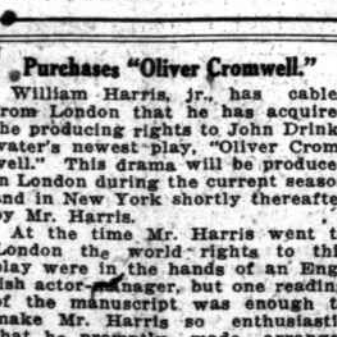
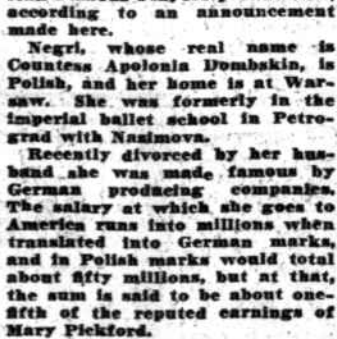
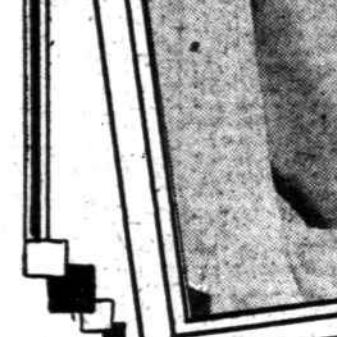
The only argument possible, of course, swiftly arises when someone—even a George Jean Nathan—makes the statement that Ziegfeld is blind on the comedy score. As a writer, George Cohan has gone blind the same medium, simply because he has taken the stage no Cohan Revue for several seasons. Cohan, by the way, is the sole producer who has come under my ken in the past five years who seems to have appreciated the powerful satiric force inherent in topics familiar to the most of us. Cohan, of course, limits his own exposition of the idea to the stage, contenting himself with a burlesque of a travesty on this and that success of the season in hand. In his own way, Cohan has, incidentally, a complete grasp of this same medium, for all his limitations of field. Who can forget his travesty of "The Tailor-Made Man" played in racing time with the dialogue in rag-time meter? It was rich, racy and silly—so much so that one restrained one's merriment to hear it all.

For a time, two or three seasons ago, George White made motions of reviving and rejuvenating the satiric principle of the earlier Ziegfeld shows in his "Scandals." From what one gathered of White's purpose, it appeared at the time that he was prepared to occupy the satiric field left vacant by Ziegfeld when the latter went over to girls and scenery, but somewhere along the production way, White must have changed his mind for the first "Scandals" that poured their unspeakable jokes across Washington footlights stood revealed as nothing but an inept, clumsy, awkward, boorish, amateurish and ill-mannered imitation of Ziegfeld at his worst with White making shift to cover up the glaring errors and imitations of his own production with much preposterousness and a dramatic situation and is gone one may say all one's mental lungs with a further and more refreshing draft.

Somewhere this season, I have heard a whisper of a new Cohan revue after the manner of the "Scandals" of those other Cohan satiric confections that make the theater a place of charm and delight and not a dormitory. This is a mere whisper, so far, a whisper light as air, but it is sincerely hoped that it will materialize into something tangible, for one has long ago given up hope of Ziegfeld going back to his earlier manner and style, a dramatic situation and is gone one may say all one's mental lungs with a further and more refreshing draft.

## TODAY'S AMUSEMENTS

Belasco—"Look Who's Here."  
National—"Burton Holmes" lectures.  
Follies—"Aphrodite."  
Keith's—"Vaudeville," matinee daily.  
Strand—"Vaudeville" and pictures, matinee daily.  
Cosmos—"Vaudeville" and pictures, matinee daily.  
Gayety—"Parisian Whirl."  
Folly—"Naughty, Naughty."  
Metropolitan—"Unseen Forces."  
Rialto—"Oh, Lady, Lady."  
Palace—"Misleading Lady."  
Garden—"Heliograph."  
Columbia—"Idols of Clay."  
Knickerbocker—"Unseen Forces."  
Crandall's—"She Loves and Lies."  
Columbia—"Idols of Clay."



## IN THE PICTURES

Joseph Cawthorne and musical comedy in "The Half Moon," the Dillingham musical show that begins a week's engagement at the National tomorrow night.

Fred Frigars, headliner of the vaudeville bill at B. F. Keith's this week, beginning tomorrow—Left upper circle.

Mary Hood, of the fairy entertainers who will add sparkle to the vaudeville program at the Cosmos this week—Right upper circle.

Cleo Mayfield, the brilliant young musical comedy actress who is co-starring with Cecil Lean in the musical comedy, "Look Who's Here," which begins a week's run at the Belasco tonight—Lower left.

Pauline Armitage, the fascinating young interpreter of the role of "Aphrodite" in the Comstock and Gest spectacle, "Aphrodite," which begins an engagement at Follies tonight—Lower right.

Billy Watson, the famous comedy star, who heads his "Parisian Whirl," in a week's engagement at the Gayety beginning this afternoon—Left oval at bottom.

May Hamilton, one of the feminine stars of "Naughty, Naughty," the burlesque frolic which will be seen as the week's attraction at the Folly, beginning today.

Mirth and Melody  
Hold the Theater  
As Yuletide NearsOnly One Day's Performance of  
Regular Drama Scheduled  
For the Week.

THE WASHINGTON THEATER, bowed down during the past week with drama of an intensity that frequently amounted to tragedy, shakes off the burden as Yuletide approaches and enters into the spirit of the Christmas season with zest and colorful gaiety.

Poli's, last week the resort of opera lovers, opens its doors tonight on the massive Comstock and Gest spectacle, "Aphrodite." The National begins tomorrow night a week's run of "The Half Moon," the Dillingham musical offering, while the Belasco announces a week's return engagement of Cecil Lean and Cleo Mayfield in the musical comedy, "Look Who's Here," beginning tonight. The Garrick will remain dark for six days of the current week, opening on Christmas afternoon with Mrs. Catherine Cushing's new play, "High Noon," which will be the Garrick offering during the week thereafter.

Excellent vaudeville and burlesque programs, fully in keeping with the season, are also announced.

## "Aphrodite"—Poli's.

"Aphrodite," Comstock and Gest's massive and spectacular production of Pierre Louys' famous classic romance of ancient Egypt, which was one of the sensations of the past season in New York, begins an engagement at Poli's tonight. The play, the original French was the work of Pierre Frondaie and was adapted to the American stage by Henri Favrier and Alceim Goetzl. The costumes are the work of Percy Anderson and Leon Baker, while the ballet and choreographic scenes were created and staged by Michael Fokine. E. Lyall Swete staged the production, which employs a cast of 300 persons.

## "The Half Moon"—National.

"The Half Moon," the Charles Dillingham musical production, starring Joseph Cawthorne, comes to the National tonight, from its recent New York engagement. The book is by William Le Baron and Victor Jacobi has contributed the score. Fred G. Latham and Allan K. Foster staged the production and Mr. Cawthorne has been surrounded by a cast of principals that is noteworthy, including Joseph Santley, Maude Eburne, Oscar Shaw, May Thompson, Elaine Palmer, William Ingersoll, and Edna May Oliver. The "Half Moon" is the musical production which displaced "The Night Boat" at the Liberty Theater, New York, when the latter production took to the road some time ago.

## "Look Who's Here"—Belasco.

Cecil Lean and Cleo Mayfield, co-starring in the musical comedy success, "Look Who's Here," will play a return engagement in Washington this week at the Belasco, beginning tonight. The book and lyrics are by Frank Mandel and Edward Paulson, while the score is credited to Silvio Hrein. "Look Who's Here" had an extended run at the Forty-fourth Street Theater in New York since its last appearance here. The cast that surrounds the two co-stars includes Julia Gifford, Sylvia de France, the Clarke Sisters, George R. Lynch, Stanley Warner, William Wheeler, Mario Villani and a snappy chorus.

## "High Noon"—Garrick.

Manager R. G. Craigin has just arranged for another premier, "High Noon," at the Shubert-Garrick, opening Saturday, December 25. This was made possible by switching the musical comedy "Look Who's Here," originally booked at the Garrick for Christmas week, to the Belasco Theater. "High Noon" is a new play by Mrs. Catherine Cushing, and its engagement at the Shubert-Garrick will run up to and including the following Saturday, January 1, going directly into New York from here. The cast will include Estelle Winwood, Olin Johnson, Julia Dean, Kenneth Hill and Louise Huff.

## Vaudeville—B. F. Keith's.

The Christmas week celebration commences at B. F. Keith's at the matinee tomorrow. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, at the regular matinees, Santa Claus will officiate at a tree laden with gifts and goodies. There will be also an allegorical procession and a play. On Christmas Day an entire matinee will be held at 5 o'clock. Four stars will head the bill—Trixie Frigars, Lina Abarbanell and Company, Lew Dockson and Company, and a special musical score will be introduced a play called "Cal Love" with music by Andy Rice. Kharum, the Persian, should prove a noteworthy inclusion and Francis Kennedy will join efforts in an unusual act. "Topics of the Day," the kinograms, and other features complete the program.

## Vaudeville and Pictures—Strand.

The Strand this week, beginning tomorrow, announces a novel and unusual bill that presents "F. La Reine and Company, electrical wizards, in a scientific comedy number of exceptional novelty; Frank Harty, New York's first and only 'Electric' comedian; and Dolly Jordan in 'A Few Pleasant Moments'; Frank Day and Margaret Neville in a baseball comedy skit. 'After the Game,' Brady and Mahoney in their latest 'Voyage on the Ocean of Joss'; and Paul Frederick in a picturization of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero's story, 'A Slave of Vanity,' with Nigel Barrie.

## Vaudeville and Pictures—Cosmos.

Features of the Cosmos Theater bill this week will be Dr. George Woodruff Johnston's new play, "The Grill," by the author of "Your Daughter," and Harry Cohan brings to the Gayety today his new feature, "Totem," a rich musical production. Other acts include the Camille Trio in an amusing far feature; the Dea Lys Sisters in a song and dance feature; Harry and Sophie Everett in "Adam and Eve Up to Date," with Francis, Clark and Brown in "Walters Wanted," Marion Davies in "The Restless Sex," and "Mr. Fatima," a Christie comedy.

## "Parisian Whirl"—Gayety.

With a burlesque production that is said to fairly bristle with novelties and features, the original Billy Watson brings to the Gayety today his new feature, "Parisian Whirl," for an engagement that will extend through the week. The highlight of the production is a sparkling musical comedy in two acts and six scenes which serves as a vehicle for the talents of the large and unusual cast which includes Billy Spencer, Edgar Bixley, Roy Burke, Frank Hanson, Mabelle Courtney, Anna Armstrong, Fatsy Ayer and others.

## "Naughty, Naughty"—Folly.

"Naughty, Naughty," a burlesque revue in nine scenes, presented by Irons and Clamage, with book by Arthur Clamage, will be seen at the Folly for the full week, beginning this afternoon. The production features in its cast a galaxy of fun-makers, including Sam Mitchell, Maurice Levine, Eddie Miller, Ed Kimble, Ernie Johnson, Harold Blogett, Leona Fox, May Hamilton, Louise Stewart, the Four Harmony Boys and a splendid chorus.

## "Venice and Italian Lakes"—National.

Venice, of all cities of Europe, has always been dear to the heart of every American tourist, for Venice with her canals, her palaces and churches, her sculptures and paintings and the peculiar charm of sunlight, water and shops, is unique among cities beautiful, the world over. Burton Holmes was in Venice last summer and his motion-pictures and beautifully colored views will bring to the stay-at-home the latest photographic impressions from the Queen of the Adriatic, when Mr. Holmes gives "Venice and the Italian Lakes," his fifth photo-story of travel at the New National theater tonight and tomorrow afternoon.

Pola Negri, Europe's  
Greatest Film Star  
To Play in America

By KARL H. VON WIEGAND.  
BERLIN, Dec. 18.—Pola Negri, considered the greatest film star in Europe, has been engaged by Ben Blumenthal and S. Bachmann of New York, for the American Famous Players production, according to an announcement made here.

Negri, whose real name is Konstantine Apostolou Dumbekina, is Polish, and her home is in Warsaw. She was formerly in the Imperial ballet school in Petrograd with Nudanova.

Recently divorced by her husband, she was made famous by German producing companies. The salary at which she goes to America runs into millions when translated into German marks, and in Polish marks would total about fifty millions, but at that, the sum is said to be about one-fifth of the reputed earnings of Mary Pickford.

## Purchases "Oliver Cromwell."

William Harris, Jr., has cabled from London that he has acquired the producing rights to John Drinkwater's newest play, "Oliver Cromwell." This drama will be produced in London during the current season and in New York shortly thereafter by Mr. Harris.

At the time Mr. Harris went to London the world rights to this play were in the hands of an English actor-manager, but one reading made him realize that the play was a masterpiece and was worth to him the purchase of these rights for himself.

## More Woods' Plays.

A. H. Woods, apparently, is feeling more optimistic about the theater situation, for he has placed one play in rehearsal and is casting a second. The first is a work by Michael Morton, entitled "Woman to Woman," for which Willette Kershaw, A. E. Anson, Hilda Spong and Charles Waldron are among those employed. The second is another (and apparently typical) Wilson Collier farce, called "Up in the Hay-mow," it has been relouched by the many-sided Mr. Hopwood.

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE NEW PLAYS

Facts, Fiction and  
Mythology Figure  
In Poli's Spectacle

Facts, fiction and mythology figure in the presentation of "Aphrodite," the production of "Aphrodite," which F. Ray Comstock and Morris Gest will present at Poli's tonight.

In Greek mythology, Aphrodite is the supposed daughter of Neptune and the Goddess Venus. She is the Goddess of Love, and was worshipped generally throughout the East, being called by various names—Astarte, Isis and Aphrodite. Mythology says she sprang from the seas in all her glorious beauty, and tradition pictures her as riding the waves upon a boat made from a shell.

In "Aphrodite," the romance by Pierre Louys, the two historical characters are Berenike, Queen of Egypt, who reigned from about 55 B. C. to 53 B. C. She was the daughter of Auletes, Ptolemy, and the elder sister of Cleopatra. The role of Demetrios in "Aphrodite" is also a historical one, for Demetrios is easily identified as a famous sculptor of Alexandria of that period, while the mutilated statue of the Goddess Aphrodite, made by Demetrios in Alexandria, is one of the treasures of the Louvre in Paris.

The historical romance of the love of Queen Berenike and the sculptor Demetrios, was selected by Pierre Louys as the basis for his famous novel, which was first published in Paris in 1895. It has remained one of the greatest of modern French classics for all these many years. Rare copies of his novel, privately translated and published, have been sold at exorbitant prices, but only to a few.

## A New O'Neill Play.

Eugene O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones" being carried on for the remainder of the month at the theater of the Provincetown Players in New York, that stalwart group have rejected all offers to move up town. There will be another O'Neill play on the next bill to be offered in January. It will be entitled "Diff'rent," and Edna St. Vincent Millay will play the leading role.

Cleo Mayfield Seen  
As Stageland's Best  
Dressed Woman Star

The best-dressed woman on the American stage.

That is the phrase often used to describe Cleo Mayfield, co-star with Cecil Lean in "Look Who's Here."

In much the same manner that the Lillian Russell was styled "The Queen of Light Opera," Miss Mayfield claims to wear the crown today as the leader of style and feminine loveliness. But few of the many women appearing behind the footlights can claim both these qualities.

Miss Mayfield is said to be a creator of American fashions. When "Look Who's Here" opened for its long run at the Forty-fourth Street Theater in New York, Miss Mayfield's hats and gowns were remarkable. They were daring and extreme, yet admittedly stunning and beautiful.

Miss Mayfield employs extreme originality in preparing her wardrobe. Each season she is visited by a commissionaire from Paris who brings the latest sensations in gowns of the Rue de la Paix. Those are selected by Miss Mayfield according to her taste and adapted to the production in which she appears.

A Chinese Critic.

"The first motion pictures shown in a small Chinese town created consternation," declares Wanda Howard, the American dramatic actress, who has spent the last two years as the leading woman with an American dramatic company in the Far East.

One awe-struck critic, seeking to explain it to the readers of his rural paper, found himself puzzled. However, he managed to get the thought over when he declared that the pictures are acquired on a wall."

## He Drank Anything.

Buster Keaton was being examined for life insurance. The Comique Film Company, producers of the Keaton comedies which are released through Metro, had decided that a policy for \$100,000 was necessary. After the physical examination, the M. J. asked:

Santley, Once a Hit  
As a Thriller Hero,  
Now a Musical Star

Joseph Santley, now appearing in the latest Dillingham production, "The Half Moon," is a specialist. In fact he deliberately specialized away from the line in which he was known from coast to coast to become a great success in an entirely different one.

Santley is 31 years old, and all but four years of his life have been associated with the stage. He was born in Salt Lake City. His mother was a member of a stock company and "Handsome Joe" was still in long clothes when he made his first appearance.

Before he was 10 he had risen to individual stardom, and Al. H. Woods had plastered his picture on 24 sheets from one end of the country to the other as "Billy the Kid," in the famous old melodrama of that name. As Billy the Kid, Santley toured for years, his exploits the delight of the gallery gods. But gradually he grew up. And the grate for the melodrama waned. Movies came in to supply thrills impossible on the legitimate stage. And Santley found himself without a vocation.

So he sat down and took stock of himself. Discovered that he had a nimble pair of legs, a pleasing voice, a slender, graceful build and a pair of soulful dark blue eyes. The conclusion was obvious: Musical comedy.

So Santley wisely left the stage for a year. Billy the Kid was coming matinee idol worked for hours every day at his singing and dancing, with such good results that within a few months after his return to the stage he had once more risen to stardom, this time in musical comedy, where he has had a series of successes as the handsome young hero of "The Woman Hater," "When Dreams Come True," "Judy, Judy," "The Never Home" and "Big a Good Fellow."

Billy Hart's "double" in many pictures, Howard Milleret, was killed by falling from a horse in Arizona, while William a scene for the picture "Custer's Last Stand," with the Marshall-Nelson Company.

## CHRISTMAS MUSIC

Brilliant and exceptional programs of music for Christmas week are announced by the various photoplay theaters of the city.

Director Gannon, of the Palace Symphony Orchestra, announces an overture selection, "Christmas Fantasies" (Brooks), which should prove particularly timely.

Miss Frances W. Scherger, lyric soprano, will be the soloist for the third of the special musical offerings arranged by the Knickerbocker today and tomorrow, her program including "Your Eyes Told Me So." Special Christmas music will also be heard in other Crandall theaters.

At the Rialto, Director Daniel Breeskin has arranged selections from "Tickee Me" as the overture during Christmas week, and a special musical score will also be offered as a feature of the photoplay program at Moore's Garden.

At the Columbia, Director Leon Branstetter announces a repetition of the program that scored such a pronounced success last week, consisting of a prelude, "Mourning Moods," from Suite I, Peer Gynt (Greig), with bird calls and incidental effects, and overture, "Dance of the Hours," from Le Giscons.

## New Hit for Friml.

"June Love," the new Friml musical piece, is well spoken of in Boston, and Elsie Alder, its prima donna, even more so. "She returns," writes Mr. Parker in the Transcript "to a stage that needs her lightness of touch, her brightness of spirit, her readiness with many a grace and many an ability of the born and practiced singer of operetta. With a glint of the eye, a turn of the hand, a whisk of the skirt, an intonation upon her speaking or her singing voice, she gives the part an endless vivacity and variety."

Here is the very pitch and point, the mingled charm of zest and acting in the musical plays. Not for nothing did Vienna, where operetta is one of the joys of the people, school Miss Alder.